



This guide walks you through presenting ***Building Relationships: Creating a Caring Community***. These are suggestions, so please use and adapt the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (17)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Community Reflection*
  - » *Opportunities to Enhance Community*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with information about the importance of a caring community for young children and practices to help create a supportive environment in the classroom.
- *Creating a Caring Community* is one in a series of in-service suites on *Building Relationships* within the *Social and Emotional Support* section of the Foundation of the House structure. Each of these in-service suites describes teaching strategies which help support positive teacher-child relationships in the classroom.
- For experienced teachers, this in-service suite may be used to reflect on and strengthen their caring classroom community. For novice teachers, this in-service suite may be used to introduce the concept of classroom community and demonstrate steps they can take to enrich their classrooms.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunity to reflect on their values and experiences with community. Community-building activities and general practices are also introduced.



## SLIDE 1: CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

### Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.
- Provide an idea for an ice breaker related to the topic of classroom community. (e.g., tell someone next to you about the different communities that you are a part of and discuss your answers to some of the following questions. How do you know when you belong? What makes you feel like you belong to a community? What are some aspects of community that you view as important and how could you incorporate them into your classroom?).

### Introduce topic:

- *Creating a Caring Community* focuses on the importance of creating a classroom that fosters a sense of caring, belonging, membership, and collaboration.



## SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

### Review NCQTL Framework for Effective Practice

- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments;
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment;
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.

*Building Relationships: Creating a Caring Classroom* fits into the *foundation* of the house structure. When teachers are able to connect and build strong relationships with children, an atmosphere of caring and belonging permeates the classroom environment. Children who learn to trust that their teacher is responsive to their needs are more likely to begin to respond to the needs of their peers. When children become aware and responsive to the needs of their peers, brought on by the care and trust they feel from their teacher, a caring community of learners can be created.



OBJECTIVES	
TO REFLECT	on the importance of community
TO HIGHLIGHT	the importance of teaching children to care
TO PROVIDE EXAMPLES	of activities that enhance the sense of classroom community

## SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

There are three objectives for this presentation:

- First, we will reflect on the importance of community.
- Next, we will highlight the importance of teaching children to care.
- Last, we will provide examples of activities that help create a caring classroom.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY	
Shared Rules	Traditions
Values	Responsibility
Membership	Cultural Perspectives
Self-Expression	Support

## SLIDE 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

### NOTE

Ask participants to discuss words that come to mind when they think about caring. When finished, add the words and concepts on this slide to enrich their discussion.

### DISCUSSION

Have participants share words they would use to describe community. Record their responses on a large flip chart. Advance through the slide for more “community related” words to add to the list.

- Membership
- Support
- Traditions
- Shared Rules
- Responsibility
- Child Expression
- Cultural Perspectives
- Values

When we think about the word community, certain feelings, associations, and phrases may come to mind, based on our own life experiences. If our goal is to build a positive learning environment for the children and families in our classrooms, we need to first reflect on what this word means to us as teachers.



## LEARNING ACTIVITY:

### COMMUNITY REFLECTION

This learning activity asks teachers to reflect on their beliefs about community. Teachers are then asked to envision a classroom community that respects their beliefs and the beliefs of the families in their program. For this activity, participants are encouraged to work in groups.

#### HANDOUT

Distribute and review the *Community Reflection* handout.

#### DISCUSSION

Have participants share their ideas.

#### NOTE

For this activity presenters might want to refer to the *Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Birth to Five* at: [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/ecd/culture\\_and\\_diversity/manage\\_pub\\_00602a1\\_092305.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/ecd/culture_and_diversity/manage_pub_00602a1_092305.html)

## WHAT IS CARING?



Caring is engaging in a set of voluntary intellectual and emotional acts.



Caring behavior is developed over time by interacting thoughtfully everyday.



Caring is more than "smiles and hugs."

## SLIDE 5: WHAT IS CARING?

Caring can be defined in different ways. Words such as helpful, respectful, compassionate, kind, thoughtful, understanding and comforting may come to mind. When we delve deeper into what caring truly means, we can better teach it as a concept to a room full of young learners. Prosocial behaviors include caring behaviors such as sharing, helping, cooperation, and showing empathy and kindness (Hyson & Taylor, 2011).

- Leaders in the field of prosocial behavior describe caring behaviors as needing to be **voluntary** on the child's part in order to be considered a truly caring act.
  - » Even though this intrinsic type of caring may be our ultimate goal for children, caring is a *learned* behavior and children do need to be taught caring behaviors and have them modeled for them over time.
- Caring behaviors are developed over time through the practice of *continuous* thoughtful interactions. Implications here are that children need multiple opportunities throughout the day to practice caring for each other and for their environment.
  - » Caring classrooms are not created overnight or with simply one or two opportunities to practice caring. Caring classrooms are created with a teaching team that constantly models and encourages kindness. Children need to be provided with pre-planned as well as naturally occurring opportunities to practice caring for each other.
- As much as smiles and hugs are arguably an important aspect of creating a positive climate, we know that true caring goes far beyond these simple gestures to include more complex behaviors such as cooperation, generosity, empathy, and being able to take another's perspective.

### NOTE

Refer to the Hyson & Taylor (2011) article listed in *Helpful Resources*.

WHY TEACH CHILDREN  
CARING BEHAVIORS?



## SLIDE 6: WHY TEACH CHILDREN CARING BEHAVIORS?

Why teach children how to care for each other? Why might it be important for children to practice caring for each other early on in their lives?

### DISCUSSION

Have participants share their ideas either with the whole group or in small groups.

Here are some answers to add to the discussion if participants have not mentioned these ideas.

- Children who are taught and encouraged to show caring behaviors early on, are more likely to continue these behaviors in later years.
- Prosocial behaviors also predict children's strength in other developmental areas such as academic and social and emotional skills.
- Studies show that children who show higher levels of caring behaviors tend to be more "school ready" than those that don't.

### NOTE

Resources for presenters on research on the development and importance of prosocial behaviors include:

Denham, S. A., Blair, K. A., DeMulder, E., Levitas, J., Auerbach-Major, S., et al. (2003). Preschool emotional competence: Pathway to social competence. *Child Development*, 74(1), 238–256

Thompson, R. A., & Goodman, M. (2011). Development of self, relationships, and socioemotional competence. In O. A. Barbarin, & B. H. Wasik, (Eds.), *Handbook of child development & early education: Research to practice*. (pp. 147–171). New York: Guilford Press.



## CARING CREATES A RIPPLE EFFECT



## SLIDE 7: CARING CREATES A RIPPLE EFFECT

Let's think about the concept of kindness spreading in an early childhood classroom like a drop of rain that creates a ripple effect in a body of water.

- The ripple begins with a caring teaching team who model thoughtful, kind, and compassionate behavior with each other, their families, and the children.
- The caring ripples out as the teachers establish positive relationships with every child in their care.
- The children begin to feel safe and secure knowing their teachers have their best interests at heart and the ripple continues.
- This security allows for the children to then look beyond their own immediate needs to the needs of each other.
- The ripple has reached the shore when the children and teachers consistently care for each other, thus creating a strong and caring classroom community. And another drop of caring behaviors falls into the water and the ripple effect begins again.

With this analogy, each ripple influences the next and is part of a greater whole.

## SLIDE 8: VIDEO: CARING FOR EACH OTHER

### Introduce the video.

Inform participants this video demonstrates what can happen in a classroom where a caring sense of community is taught and encouraged. Children with no immediate intervention from a teacher are seen caring for another child, and in the end, it's the children themselves who have an impact on the child's sense of belonging and well-being.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants to discuss what caring lessons may have been previously taught or encouraged in this classroom that lead these children to behave so kindly in this video clip.

VIDEO: Caring for Each Other

*Length of video: Approximately 55 seconds*

A CARING CLASSROOM BEGINS  
WITH THE FIRST D.R.O.P.



**D**esign a caring environment  
**R**espond to individual needs  
**O**rganize awareness activities  
**P**romote and encourage a  
sense of community

## SLIDE 9:

### A CARING CLASSROOM BEGINS WITH THE FIRST D.R.O.P.

Teachers need to be intentional and explicit in creating a caring classroom community. They need to model caring behaviors with each other and children. Teachers need to establish clear expectations for children, comment and celebrate when children engage in caring behaviors, and offer support, prompts, and cues when children need assistance.

To help teachers remember how to create a caring classroom, we will use the acronym D.R.O.P. In D.R.O.P., the D stands for Design a caring environment, R stands for Respond to individual needs, O stands for Organize awareness activities, and the P stands for Promote and encourage a sense of community.



## DESIGN A CARING ENVIRONMENT



## SLIDE 10: DESIGN A CARING ENVIRONMENT

Caring classrooms begin with the classroom environment. Details such as the type of language the teaching team uses with each other, the way classroom furniture is arranged, and the welcoming feeling conveyed to families and caregivers as they enter the classroom, are all part of creating a caring classroom environment.

### NOTE



If participants need help generating ideas for the following discussion questions, review *Tips for Teachers*. This document provides examples of classroom activities and actions that may help spur on participant discussion for each of the four discussion areas. Distribute *Tips for Teachers* to participants after Slide 14.

### DISCUSSION



With the following reflection questions, allow participants to discuss each question either in a round-robin format, together in a small group, or as an individual reflection exercise.

- What are the children learning from our classroom space?
- What story does the environment tell about the type of community we want to create?
- What can we do before the children and families arrive to create a welcoming space and a sense of blossoming community?
- How can we ensure that the children's families are a part of the classroom community?

## RESPOND TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS



## SLIDE 11: RESPOND TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Being aware and responsive to the individual needs of children is a prerequisite for them to feel secure enough to look beyond their own immediate needs and begin to notice the needs of their peers. By establishing positive relationships with the children in our programs, we not only help to support their engagement and learning in classroom activities, we also help to increase their ability to care for others.

### DISCUSSION

With the following reflection questions, allow participants to discuss each question either in a round-robin format, together in a small group, or as an individual reflection exercise.

- What can we do or change in order to make connecting with individual children a crucial part of our day?
- How can we give each child a sense of security in the classroom?
- How can we structure our daily schedule to connect with children in positive ways?
- How can we acknowledge and keep the children connected to their home culture in the classroom?

## ORGANIZE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES



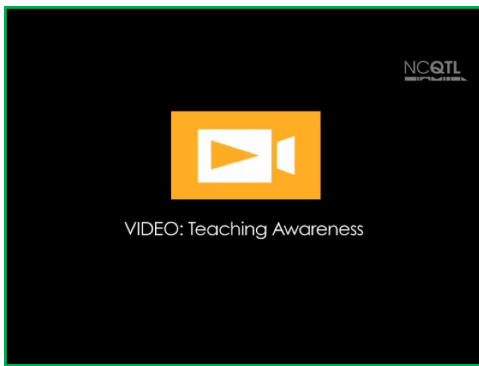
## SLIDE 12: ORGANIZE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Raising awareness of how children feel about different situations or problems is an important step when teaching children to care about each other. When children are made aware of how their actions affect others, it begins the process of learning to be compassionate.

### DISCUSSION

With the following reflection questions, allow participants to discuss each question either in a round-robin format, together in a small group discussion, or as an individual reflection exercise.

- How can we organize a group problem-solving activity to give children practice generating solutions to simple classroom problems?
- What activities can we do together to help children identify and express their emotions?
- What small and/or large group activities can we organize to encourage empathy?



*Length of video: Approximately 3 minutes*

## SLIDE 13:

### VIDEO: TEACHING AWARENESS

**Introduce the video:** Inform participants that this video shows classroom teachers bringing awareness to how children feel during certain classroom situations.

#### NOTE

Presenters can pause between each of these four video clips to discuss with participants.

#### VIDEO: RESPONDING TO CHILDREN'S NEEDS

##### DISCUSSION

This clip highlights the importance of modeling caring behaviors with children and responding to their individual needs.

Ask participants to discuss:

- When encouraging children to problem solve, how do you bring awareness to children's feelings?

#### VIDEO: MISUNDERSTANDING

##### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher helping two children clarify a misunderstanding regarding ethnicity.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What does this teacher do to help children feel both comfortable and validated?
- What have you done in the past to help children work through misunderstandings?

#### VIDEO: APOLOGY

##### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher helping two children work through a problem on the playground.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What does this teacher do to help clarify the problem for these children?
- How do you teach children about apologies in your classroom?

#### VIDEO: REPAIRING HURT FEELINGS

##### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher talking about how she helped two girls repair their negative feelings by using language modeling and encouraging their physical affection.

- How have you helped children resolve emotional conflicts in your classroom?
- Can you think of a time that you helped a student work through negative feelings they had for another child? What did you say to help the children involved?



## PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY



## SLIDE 14: PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Capitalizing on teachable moments and encouraging children to make decisions for the good of the group are crucial parts of strengthening and maintaining the feeling of a caring community in your classroom. Finding ways to celebrate when children display caring behaviors shows them that their kind actions are noticed and valued.

### DISCUSSION



With the following reflection questions, allow participants to discuss each question either in a round-robin format, together in a small group, or as an individual reflection exercise.

- What can we do to honor and strengthen new or previously existing relationships between children?
- What can we do to give children a sense of belonging in the classroom?
- What can we do to establish a collective sense of responsibility for the classroom culture and for the members of the classroom?
- In what ways do we want to celebrate the caring behaviors we witness in our classrooms?

## LEARNING ACTIVITY: OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY

This learning activity includes classroom vignettes depicting interactions between children and teachers. Participants read each vignette and discuss elements that promote and/or discourage a feeling of caring and community.

Participants may work independently or in small groups.

### HANDOUT

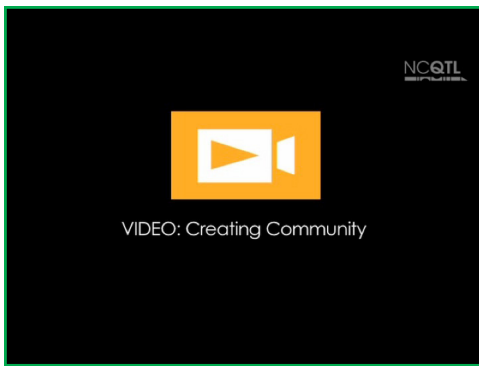


Distribute and review the *Opportunities to Enhance Community* handout.

### DISCUSSION



Have participants share their ideas. If needed, sample responses for items on this learning activity can be found in *Opportunities to Enhance Community: Facilitator Guide*.



*Length of video: Approximately 4 minutes and 52 seconds*

## SLIDE 15: VIDEO: CREATING COMMUNITY

**Introduce the video:** Inform participants that these videos demonstrate a variety of teachers engaging children in planned activities that promote and encourage a caring classroom community.

### NOTE

Presenters can pause between each of these six video clips to discuss with participants. If relevant, refer to the previous discussions regarding community.

### VIDEO: COMPLIMENTS DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher reading compliments to a child written by other children in the class. Explicitly teaching children how to give and receive compliments from their peers is one way to teach caring behaviors.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What do you do in your classroom to teach children how to give each other compliments?

### VIDEO: FAMILIES DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher talking about the importance of making families feel comfortable in the classroom. It also shows a father and daughter playing in the art area together.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What things do you do in your classroom to make families feel comfortable? How do you extend the feeling of community to include the families of the children in your care?

### VIDEO: GAMES DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher talking about playing a game with children to promote community and problem solving behaviors.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What types of classroom games do you play in your classroom to promote a sense of community and problem solving amongst the children?

### VIDEO: JOBS

### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher talking about the importance of children caring for the classroom by taking on small jobs or responsibilities.

Ask participants to discuss:

- In what ways do you teach children how to care for their classroom environment?

### VIDEO: NAMES

### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher beginning circle time by singing a song using children's names. She also helps children find their circle spots by saying their names and providing them information about where they sit. By singing a name song and using children's names during conversation, children are able to learn each other's names more quickly. Knowing each other's names helps build classroom community.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What activities or games do you play in your classroom to help children to learn each other's names?

### VIDEO: RULES

### DISCUSSION

This clip shows a teacher talking about the importance of helping children create classroom rules together as a group. She describes the four rules that her students came up with.

Ask participants to discuss:

- What is your process for facilitating the creation of classroom rules? How do you help children create rules together as a group?

## REVIEW

- The importance of creating a sense of community
- The importance of teaching children to care
- Incorporate activities that enhance the sense of classroom community

## SLIDE 16: REVIEW

To review, we reflected on the importance of community and what that word means to different cultures and individuals. We highlighted the importance of teaching children to care and the long-lasting implications that caring behaviors have on children's development. Last, we looked at examples of activities that can further help create a caring classroom community.

### NOTE



For more information on ways to build positive relationships with children, please refer to *Building Relationships: Fostering Connections* and *Building Relationships: Being Aware of Children's Needs*.

## SLIDE 17: CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.



For more information, contact us at: [NCQTL@UW.EDU](mailto:NCQTL@UW.EDU) or 877-731-0764

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